

## Future of Farming Survey and Listening Sessions Summary

### *Background*

The Future of Farming survey was available on the project website from March 10th to July 15, 2008. The survey was widely distributed through the project network of Steering Committee members, commissions, associations, industry advocates, WSU and other educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and many additional public and private stakeholders. In order to assure maximum access to the survey, the project network:

- distributed more than 4000 rack cards,
- made announcements through electronic and hard-copy newsletters,
- sent invitations through distribution lists, provided the survey link directly from their websites, and
- made personal announcements during meetings and events.

WSDA arranged for radio spots in both English and Spanish. Since the project survey was timed with the NASS survey and many other 2008 surveys, the project took a pointed qualitative approach that would allow FOF to capture the voice of participants in short or long-form, according to the choice and available time of the respondent. In these ways, the project cast a wide net to ensure that the views of producers from every geographic location, farm size, and product type could be heard.

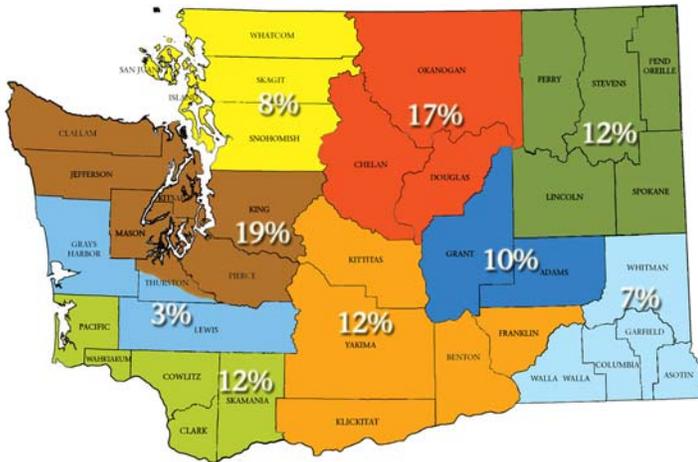
The survey was fully completed by over 800 respondents, including approximately 400 producers representing every size and type of farm. Respondents that described themselves as “consumers” or “eaters” were separated from those that described themselves as producers. A random sampling of the self-described producers was checked against the Department of Revenue’s Business Records Database to confirm that they were all legitimate agricultural enterprises.

Listening Sessions were held in twenty locations in every part of the state, from Port Ludlow to Pasco, from Ridgefield to Ritzville. Attendance varied at these meeting from a handful to 40 or more. Altogether approximately 400 persons participated in the listening sessions.

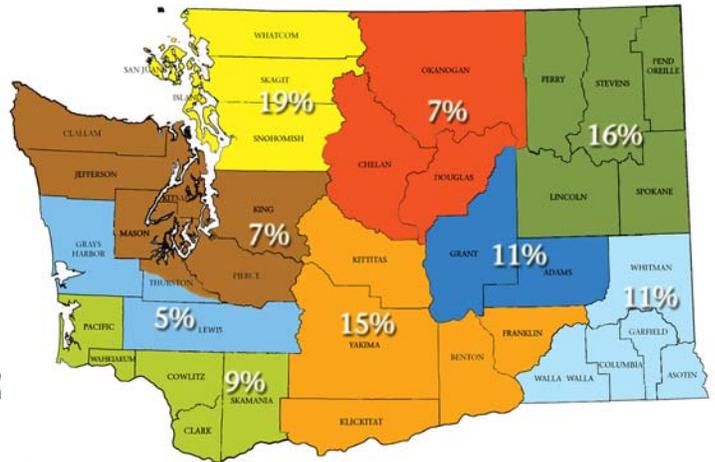
### *Demographics*

In listening sessions, farmers and ranchers in every part of the state expressed similar hopes and concerns for the future. These hopes and concerns were mirrored by the survey responses, which were combined with listening session feedback to become the basis of Steering Committee discussions and all subsequent specialist group meetings and working paper development. Every effort was made to garner significant input from every region of the state. Figure 1 shows the percentage of

bona fide producer survey respondents from each part of the state. Figure 2 shows the percentage of listening session attendees from each region.



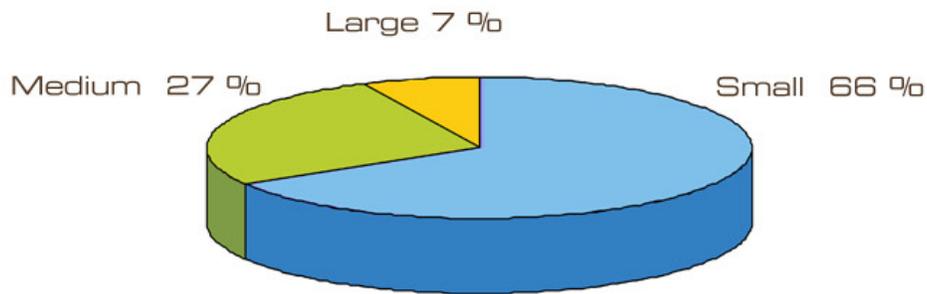
**Figure 1: Producer Survey Respondents by location**



**Figure 2: Listening Session Participants by location**

***Self Described Farm Size***

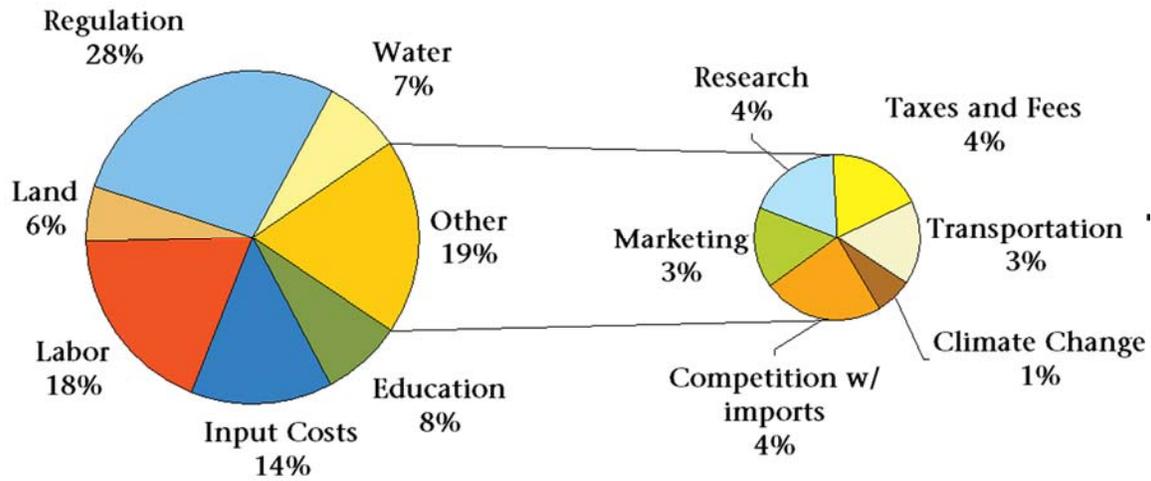
Survey respondents and listening group participants self-described their farm size. As to be expected, while one dryland wheat producer described her 7,000 acre farm as small, a diversified crop direct marketing producer described his 250 acre farm as large. Coincidentally, the self-described farm size of participants closely paralleled the NASS farm size statistics for Washington.



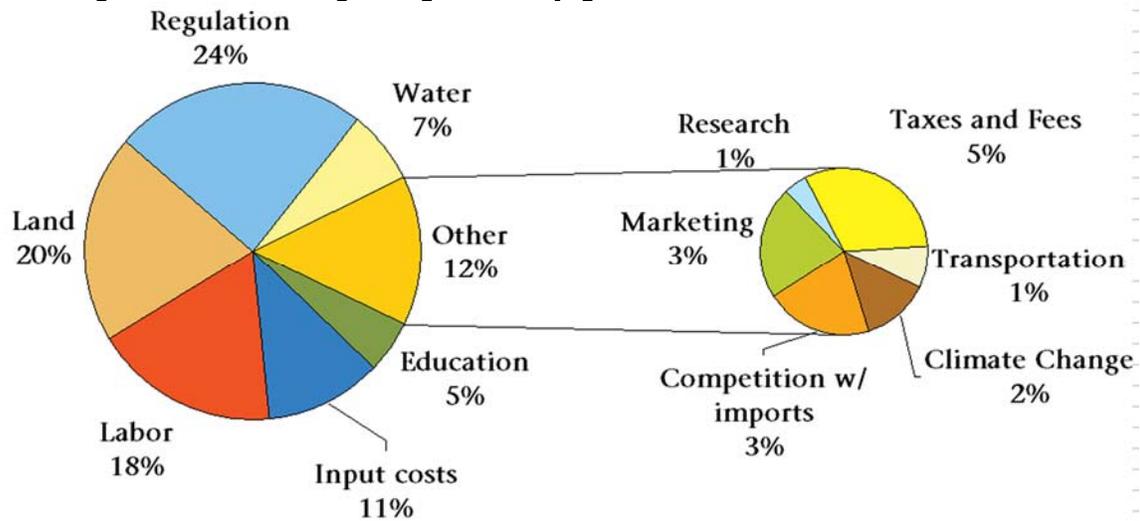
***Unified Response***

In most listening sessions, participants would start out by stating a belief that their challenges and opportunities were different than those of producers in other parts of the state. However, Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate that while the emphasis on particular issues may vary slightly due to geography, farm size or nuance of crop requirements, the findings are unified across the state.

**Figure 3: Challenges reported by producers east of the Cascades**



**Figure 4: Challenges reported by producers west of the Cascades**



The Future of Farming project used the unified response from both listening sessions and survey results to delve more deeply into the topics that were of most concern to the state’s producers as a whole. Quotes from producers from across the state, across farm size, and across crop or area of production provided the foundation for each subsequent specialist meeting or working paper assignment.

Written by Carrie Coineandubh

## Appendix A: Survey Questions

*Please help us identify and prioritize the 20-year strategic plan for Washington agriculture by answering the following questions:*

1. What is your vision for the Future of Farming?
2. Looking into the future, what and where are the opportunities for Washington producers?
3. What are the current and future challenges?
4. What are the top three actions that our state Legislators can take to help the agriculture producers stay in production over the next 20 years?

*Please answer some questions about you:*

1. What is your role in the agriculture industry?
2. Where are you located?
3. Is your production scale small, medium, or large?
4. Are you a first or multi-generation producer?
5. Anything else you would like us to know?